

The WORLD of PATRICIA POLACCO

A Guide for Educators

Curriculum Connections,
Discussion Questions &
Classroom Activities



Philomel Books • Puffin Books

Divisions of Penguin Young Readers Group

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ALL ABOUT PATRICIA POLACCO



Dear Educators,

I am most gratified to be included in your curriculum. This guide features my books and suggested activities as a basis for your instruction in the classroom. I am hopeful that by using this guide, your students will tell their own stories . . . in their own unique voice.

My books cover many aspects of daily life through which your children will recognize their own relationships in their families and communities. My stories deal with multicultural situations as well as multigenerational settings. I hope that by reading these stories and doing the activities your students will recognize personal connections with family that will help them create new memories and traditions.

I'm thrilled to be a part of you and your classroom. I believe with all my heart that the American classroom teachers are one of our greatest and most heroic treasures.

Most sincerely,

Patricia Polacco

"I WAS BORN IN LANSING, MICHIGAN in 1944. Soon after my birth I lived in Williamston, Michigan and then moved onto my grandparents farm in Union City, Michigan. I lived on the farm with my mom and grandparents until 1949. I must say that living on that little farm with them was the most magical time of my life . . . and that my Babushka (my grandmother) and other grandparents were some of the most inspirational people in my life. This was the place where I heard such wonderful stories told. This was the place where a real meteor fell into our font yard.

My parents were divorced when I was three, and both my father and mother moved back into the homes of their parents. I spent the school year with my mother, and the summers with my dad. In both households I was the apple of my grandparents' eyes! I would say that these relationships with my grandparents have most definitely influenced my life and my work. You probably have noticed that in almost every book that I write there is a very young person who is interacting with an elderly person. Personally, I feel that this is the most valuable experience of my life . . . having the wonder of knowing both children and elderly people.

In 1949 we left the farm to move to Coral Gables,

Florida. I lived there with my mom and my brother, Richard, for almost three years. Then we moved to Oakland, California. I remained there for most of my young life on into my adulthood. What I loved the most about this neighborhood is that all of my neighbors came in as many colors, ideas and religions as there are people on the planet. How lucky I was to know so many people that were so different and yet so much alike.

When I was in elementary school I wasn't a very good student. I had a terrible time with reading and math. As a matter of fact, I did not learn how to read until I was almost fourteen years old. Can you imagine what it was like to see all my friends do so well in school when I wasn't? I thought I was dumb. I didn't like school because there was this boy that always teased me and made me feel even dumber. When I was fourteen, it was learned that I have a learning disability. It is called dyslexia. I felt trapped in a body that wouldn't do what everybody else could do. That was when one of my heroes, my teacher, found what was wrong with me and got me the help I needed to succeed in school. Of course, now that I am an adult, I realize that being learning disabled does not mean DUMB AT ALL! I have learned that being learning disabled only means that I cannot learn the way most of you do. As a matter of fact, most learning disabled children are actually GENIUSES! Once I learned how to read and caught up with the rest of my fellow students, I did very well.

I went on to a university, majored in Fine Art, then went on to do a graduate degree and even ended up with a Ph.D. in Art History. For a time I restored ancient pieces of art for museums. I eventually became the mother of two children, Steven and Traci, and devoted much of my days to their education and upbringing.

I did not start writing children's books until I was 41 years old. Mind you the "art" has always been there for me most of my life. Apparently one of the symptoms of my disability in academics is the ability to draw very, very well. So drawing, painting and sculpture have always been a part of my life even before I started illustrating my books. The books were quite a surprise, really. Mind you, I came from a family of incredible storytellers. My mother's people were from the Ukraine and Russia. My father's people were from Ireland. My

extended family were from the bayous of Louisiana and were also great story tellers. When you are raised on HEARING stories, NOT SEEING THEM, you become very good at telling stories yourself. So at the age of 41, I started putting stories that I told down on paper and did drawings to help illustrate them . . . I guess the rest is history.

I have enjoyed a wonderful career of writing books for children. Who could have guessed that little girl that was having such a tough time in school would end up an illustrator and author. Children and adults alike ask me where I get my ideas. I get them from the same place that you do . . . MY IMAGINATION. I would guess the reason my imagination is so fertile is because I came from storytelling and, WE DID NOT OWN A T.V.!!!!!! You see, when one is a writer, actor, dancer, musician, a creator of any kind, he or she does these things because they listen to that "voice" inside of them. All of us have that "voice". It is where all inspired thoughts come from . . . but when you have electronic screens in front of you, speaking that voice for you . . . it DROWNS OUT THE VOICE! When I talk to children and aspiring writers, I always ask them to listen to the voice, turn off the T.V. and LISTEN . . . LISTEN . . . LISTEN."



WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF PATRICIA POLACCO!

This booklet contains the following information and teaching and activity suggestions:

A DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR *JUNKYARD WANDERS*

Patricia Polacco's newest story is the perfect companion to *Thank You, Mr. Falker* and sure to be inspiring in its own right. This discussion guide can help lead your students in important conversations about bullying and the true meaning of genius.

HIGHLIGHTED BOOKS BY PATRICIA POLACCO

There are so many places to visit and friends to meet in the world of Patricia Polacco! Let these age levels, book descriptions, and lists of "Related Topics" guide you as you select a story to use with the activities provided in this booklet.

INTERACTIVE READING ACTIVITIES

It is important to develop reading fluency in primary grade children. Oral reading practice improves fluency, builds confidence and fosters a love of reading. These activities are designed especially to help younger children grow as readers.

READING COMPREHENSION & ACTIVE THINKING

Guide your read-aloud and teaching technique with these predicting and visualizing activity suggestions. Using modeling and guided practice during read-alouds will provide children with the tools needed to deepen comprehension when reading independently. Learning how to visualize by paying attention to detailed descriptions in an author's writing will help readers create a visual image in their minds of the story action, plot, and characters.

A DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR *JANUARY'S SPARROW*

Reminiscent of her beloved and powerful classic *Pink and Say*, *January's Sparrow* is a book to be talked about. Use this discussion guide to help inspire and encourage your classroom reading groups.

READING RESPONSE JOURNAL

Patricia Polacco's books can give students much to think about. Reading Response Journals are a great way to encourage students to think critically about the book their reading.

LANGUAGE ARTS: CONSIDERING CHARACTER

Practice descriptive writing skills and character analysis comprehension with an "I AM" Poem.

THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

Patricia Polacco's books effortlessly lend themselves to many areas of thematic study, can be easily incorporated into classroom discussion, and serve as prompts for writing workshops and journaling exercises.

THEMATIC BOOKSHELF & BIN LABELS

Photocopy and color the labels included in this booklet to use in organizing Patricia Polacco's many books into categories that will help direct your readers as they complete the projects in this booklet—or those you develop on your own. Organizing your classroom library in this way is a great way to get your students involved in author studies!



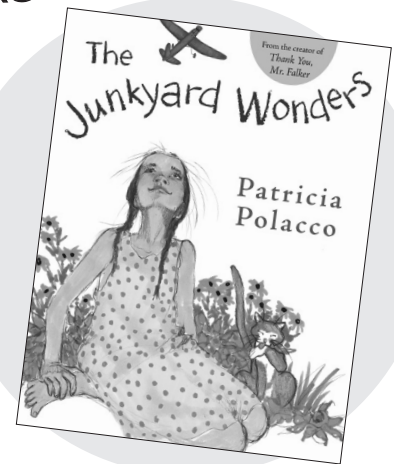
A DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR *JUNKYARD WONDERS*

Questions for Discussion:

- Why is Trisha put into a special class? What are her classmates like?
- Kay doesn't want to be friends with Trisha once she's in Mrs. Peterson's class. Why is that? What do you think about the way Kay reacts?
- Mrs. Peterson reads a long definition of genius. How does this definition differ from the people you may consider to be geniuses? Have you heard a definition like this before?
- Mrs. Peterson goes out of her way to make sure each and every student in her class feels like a wonder. How do you think this makes her a better teacher?
- How do the other kids in school treat Mrs. Peterson's class? What are some ways the class copes with these bullies?
- Even though Mrs. Peterson tries hard to make everyone feel accepted, why is Trisha still upset at being placed in this class?
- Describe all the students in the Trisha's Vanilla Tribe. In what ways are they geniuses?
- Describe the objects the class finds in the Melvin Beach junkyard. What kinds of inventions do the tribes make?
- Mrs. Peterson says, "Some people look at things the way they are and cry, 'Why!' but I want you to look at things and see what they could be and ask, 'Why not?'" This is a paraphrase of a very famous quote by George Bernard Shaw. Why is asking "Why not?" an important way to consider the world?
- The Vanilla Tribe loses an important member: Jody. In what ways does his death affect Ravanne specifically?
- How is the class finally able to launch the airship? Why was it important for the class to show the school the plane could fly?
- The kids in Mrs. Peterson's class are all different in some way or another—differences that aren't always noticeable. In what way are the students in your class each unique?
- Mrs. Peterson encourages her students to recycle old materials from the junkyard. Think about the concept of recycling. In what ways might you be able to reuse old toys or clothes you have?
- The issue of bullying and how to prevent it is of growing importance. In what ways do kids bully each other in your school? What can you do to make sure you don't participate in that type of behavior? Do you think books like this are important in the prevention of bullying?

Activity Suggestion:

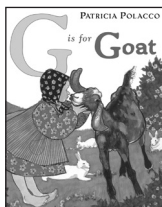
- Make your own inventions! Split your class into smaller groups, or "tribes" like Mrs. Peterson's class. Then invite them to gather objects that have been thrown out. Encourage them to find new possibilities for the objects they've gathered. Have a classroom show and tell of the wondrous inventions!



HIGHLIGHTED BOOKS BY PATRICIA POLACCO

THERE ARE SO MANY STORIES TO EXPLORE! Use the age levels and descriptions below to help you select a book to use with the activities and discussion questions listed in the pages that follow. Allow the “Related Topics” to guide you as you plan your lesson or event.

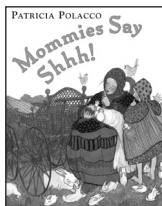
For Preschool and Kindergarten



G IS FOR GOAT

This very simple rhyming alphabet book takes on a subject dear to the author’s heart: goats! These lovable, frisky animals prance through the pages, wreaking havoc and charming young children on each spread, from A is for Apple (a goat’s favorite snack) to Z is for triplets Zig, Zag, and Zoe.

RELATED TOPICS: Animals • Language



MOMMIES SAY SHHH!

Goats say “Maa-Maa-Maa.” Birds say “Cheep-Cheep-Cheep.” Rabbits say nothing at all! But when all of these animals get together and raise a honking, braying, neighing ruckus, what do mommies say? “Shhhhhh!” With the simplest of texts and a variety of fun animal noises, *Mommies Say Shhh!* is a read-aloud winner for the preschool crowd.

RELATED TOPICS: Animals • Cause & Effect • Choral Reading

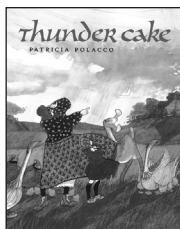


OH, LOOK!

The famous Polacco goats are back in this playful interactive chant where three mischievous little goats find their way out of the gate (squeak, squeak, squeak!), over a bridge (click, click, click!) through some mud (squish, squish, squish!) . . . and right into the path of an angry ogre! Of course, they are happy to turn right around and run straight back over the path they traveled, until at last they are back home again, safe and sound.

RELATED TOPICS: Animals • Language • Choral Reading • Sequence of Story Events

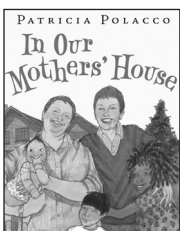
For 1st through 4th Grades



THUNDER CAKE

A loud clap of thunder booms and rattles the windows of Grandma’s old farmhouse. “This is Thunder Cake baking weather,” calls Grandma. A real Thunder Cake must reach the over before the storm arrives. But the list of ingredients is long and not easy to find . . . and the storm is coming closer all the time! *Thunder Cake* is the story of how Patricia Polacco’s grandma helped her overcome her fear of thunder when she was a little girl.

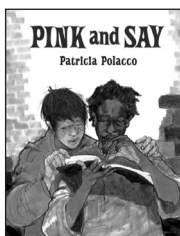
RELATED TOPICS: Character Development • Family Relationships • Everyday Heroes



IN OUR MOTHERS’ HOUSE

Marmee, Meema, and the kids are just like any other family on the block. In their beautiful house, they cook dinner together, they laugh together, and they dance together. But some of the other families don’t accept them. They say they are different. How can a family have two moms and no dad? But Marmee and Meema’s house is full of love. And they teach their children that different doesn’t mean wrong. *In Our Mothers’ House* is the perfect book to teach the wonders of love and the importance of family.

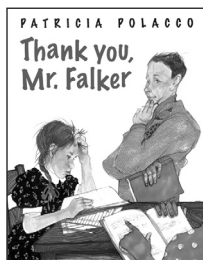
RELATED TOPICS: Understanding Differences • Family Relationships • Bullying • Love • Values • Decision Making • Everyday Heroes



PINK AND SAY

Pink and Say highlights the brief but intimate friendship of two young boys, Pinkus Aylee (Pink) and Sheldon Curtis (Say), during the Civil War. When wounded attempting to escape his unit, Say is rescued by Pink. While the frightened soldier is nursed back to health he begins to understand why his new found friend is so adamant on returning to the war: to fight against “the sickness” that is slavery. This Civil War story was passed from great-grandfather to grandmother to son, and finally to Patricia Polacco herself. Beloved for more than a decade, *Pink and Say* celebrates the shared humanity of the peoples of this world.

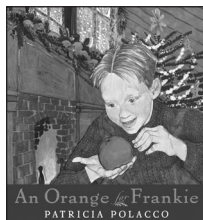
RELATED TOPICS: Character Development • Understanding Differences • Friendship • History • Decision Making • Everyday Heroes



THANK YOU, MR. FALKER

Little Trisha is overjoyed at the thought of starting school and learning how to read. But when she looks at a book, all the letters and numbers just get jumbled up. Her classmates make matters worse by calling her “dummy.” Only Mr. Falker recognizes Trisha’s incredible artistic ability and her problem—dyslexia—and takes the time to lead her finally and happily to the magic of reading. This autobiographical story is author Patricia Polacco’s personal song of thanks to teachers like Mr. Falker, who quietly but surely change the lives of the children they teach.

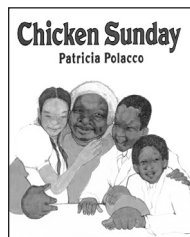
RELATED TOPICS: Character Development • Understanding Differences • Bullying • Teachers & Students • Decision Making • Everyday Heroes



AN ORANGE FOR FRANKIE

The Stowell family is abuzz with holiday excitement but Pa hasn’t returned yet from his trip to Lansing. Every year he brings back nine oranges—one for each of the children. But this year, heavy snows might mean no oranges . . . and worse, no Pa! Frankie was Patricia Polacco’s grandmother’s youngest brother, and every year she and her family remember this tale of a little boy who learned—and taught—an important lesson about giving, one Christmas long ago.

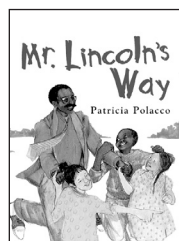
RELATED TOPICS: Family Relationships • Classroom Celebrations • Values • Traditions & Heritage



CHICKEN SUNDAY

After being initiated into a neighbor’s family, a young Russian American girl and her African American “brothers” determine to buy their Gramma Eula a beautiful Easter hat. But their good intentions are misunderstood, until they discover just the right way to pay for the hat that Eula’s had her eye on.

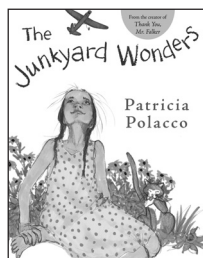
RELATED TOPICS: Sequence of Story Events • Character Development • Family Relationships • Cause & Effect • Understanding Differences • Values • Decision Making • Everyday Heroes



MR. LINCOLN’S WAY

Mr. Lincoln is the coolest principal ever! Everyone loves him . . . except for Eugene Esterhause. “Mean Gene” hates everyone who’s different. He’s a bully, a bad student, and he calls people awful names. Can the principal find a way to show “Mean Gene” that the differences between people are what make them special? *Mr. Lincoln’s Way* celebrates the unforgettable school principal who touches the lives of his students and truly empowers them.

RELATED TOPICS: Character Development • Understanding Differences • Bullying • Teachers & Students • Values • Decision Making • Everyday Heroes

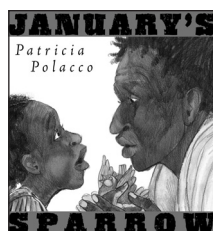


Junkyard Wonders

Young Trisha is devastated when she finds out her class at her new school is known as “the junkyard.” It is a special class, and she had moved from where she used to live so she wouldn’t be in a special class anymore! But then she meets her teacher, the amazing Mrs. Peterson, and her classmates, an oddly brilliant group of misfit kids, whom the other kids in school call junkyard kids. And, much to her own surprise, it is here in the junkyard that Trisha discovers the true meaning of genius, and that this group of misfits is, in fact, Junkyard Wonders, each and every one of them.

RELATED TOPICS: Understanding Differences • Character Development • Bullying • Teachers & Students • Everyday Heroes • Classroom Celebration

For 4th Grade and Older



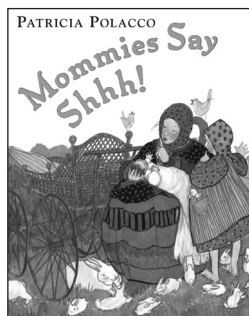
JANUARY’S SPARROW

In the middle of the still and dark night, the Crosswhites must flee the Kentucky Plantation they slave on. Dear January has been beaten and killed by the plantation master, and they fear who may be next. But, Young Sadie must leave behind her most valuable possession, the wooden sparrow carved for her by January. Through the Underground Railroad, the Crosswhites make the slow and arduous journey to Marshall, Michigan, where they finally live in freedom. And there they stay, happily, until the day a January’s sparrow mysteriously appears, with a note that reads, “I found you.” How the Crosswhites, and the whole town of Marshall, face this threat will leave readers empowered and enthralled.

RELATED TOPICS: Understanding Differences • Cause & Effect • History • Family Relationships • Decision Making

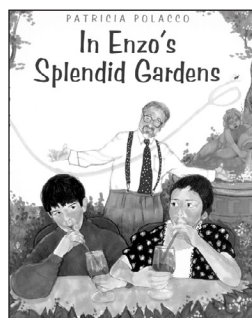
INTERACTIVE READING ACTIVITIES

IT IS IMPORTANT TO DEVELOP READING FLUENCY IN PRIMARY GRADE CHILDREN. Oral reading practice improves fluency, builds confidence and fosters the love of reading. The following activities are designed to guide you in helping your young students to grow as readers.



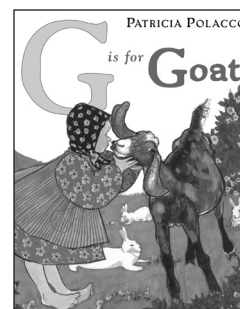
In *Mommies Say Shhh!* Patricia Polacco uses simple text and animal noises to create a fun, interactive read-aloud. Read *Mommies Say Shhh!* aloud to your class. Then split your class into groups, each group representing one of the characters in the story. Collaborate with your art teacher on a lesson that would allow students to create a mask, head piece, or prop that would identify them as their assigned character. As you read the book aloud for a second time, students should use their props and chime in to make their character's sounds that the appropriate time during the story.

The story *Oh, Look!* centers around a repetitive refrain, which children will delight in chanting over and over again during the read-aloud. Read *Oh, Look!* aloud to your class. Then, ask a student to volunteer to be the main reader and the remainder of the class will chime in to chorally read the repetitive portions of the text. After the activity is completed, photocopy the "Fun with Sounds and Pictures" activity sheet found on the next page for your students. This matching game will teach students that words can be used to describe sounds and help to develop the skill of sequencing story events.



In *Enzo's Splendid Garden* is a cumulative story, meaning that each new event that happens adds a new line to the plot. The repetition, rhythm, and rhyme that Patricia Polacco employs all help develop fluency in reading. One individual student or a small group should read the first page. The next student or group should read the following page. The first student or group should chime in when the part they originally read appears again. By the end of the book, the entire class should be reading together.

From *A is for Apple* to *Z is for Zoe*, *G is for Goat* takes you on an alphabet tour of a farm. After you read this story aloud to your class, do a shared writing activity in which you create your own unique rewrite of *G is for Goat*. Ideas could include "C is for Classroom," "K is for Kindergarten," or "S is for School." An enriched level of this activity would allow individual students to independently write their own stories, such as "F is for Family" or "H is for Home."



FUN WITH SOUNDS & PICTURES

Identify the use of onomatopoeia words—words that sound like what they describe—in *Oh, Look!*

“Can’t go over it,
can’t go under it,
can’t go around it . . .
. . . Let’s go through it!
Squeak, squeak, squeak it goes as we go through it.”
—*Oh, Look!* by Patricia Polacco

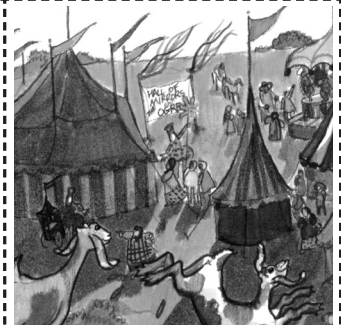


After you read the story, ask an adult to help you photocopy this page and cut out the cards below. Mix up the cards, and place them facedown on a flat surface. If you’re playing with a partner, take turns picking up two cards at a time to see if you find sound words that match the correct picture. If they do, keep the pair and take another turn. If they don’t match or you turn over two word cards or two picture cards, place both cards facedown again and let your partner take a turn. After all cards are correctly matched, work with your partner to put the card pairs in the order that they happened in the story.

Um-pah-pah,
Um-pah-pah,
Um-pah-pah!



Flap,
Flap,
Flap!



Swish,
Swish,
Swish!



Squish,
Squish,
Squish!!

Click,
Click,
Click!



Squeak,
Squeak,
Squeak!



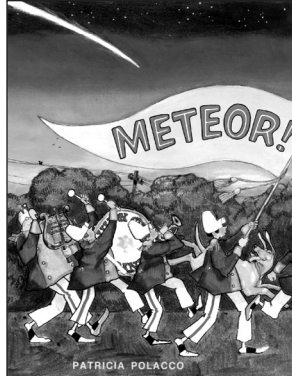
READING COMPREHENSION & ACTIVE THINKING

Predicting & Visualizing

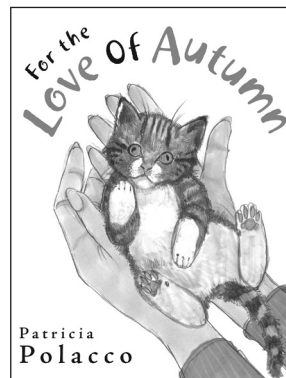
STUDENTS CAN BENEFIT FROM OPPORTUNITIES TO LISTEN AND DISCUSS BOOKS READ ALOUD TO THEM BY ADULTS. During a read-aloud, teachers should model thinking strategies and skills to enhance students' comprehension of the story. Modeling and guided practice during such activities will provide students with the tools needed to deepen comprehension when reading independently.

To help your students start actively thinking about your read-aloud selection, begin your lesson with activities designed to develop and strengthen your students' application of comprehension strategies that practice predicting and visualizing. These activities will help your students to read more deeply and critically and to gain a better understanding of the story. Choose from the examples below or use them as models and make up your own!

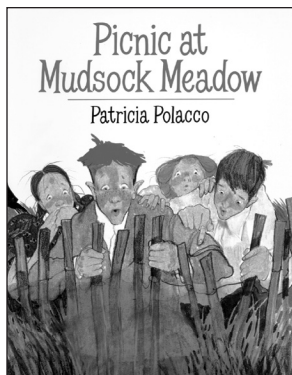
- **PREDICTING**—Select a book and its corresponding group of words from the examples provided below. Display the words on an overhead, whiteboard, handout, or pocket chart. Read the words aloud to your class and discuss their meanings. Explain that these are key words in a book you will soon be reading aloud to your class. Ask each student to write a short paragraph predicting the main idea of the book, using the key words as clues. Remind them to be sure to include all six words you provided! Invite your students to share their work with a partner and then ask several students to volunteer to read their response to the entire class. Students should keep their paragraphs and later confirm or adjust their predictions as the book is read to them.



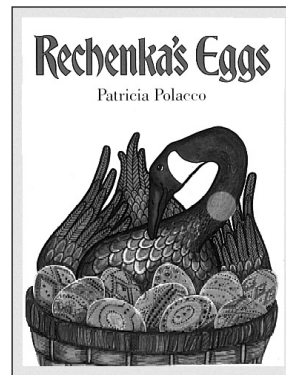
FALLEN STAR
YARD
MAGIC
PERFORMANCE
TOUCH
SPECIAL



TEACHER
KITTEN
LOST
PHONE CALL
LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT
MARRIED

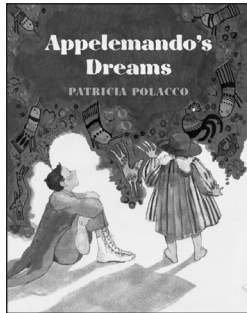


PICNIC
LEGEND
HALLOWEEN
GHOST
CONTEST
COSTUME



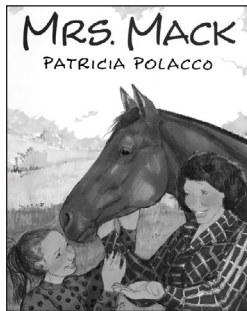
EGGS
GOOSE
SHATTERED
MIRACLE
FESTIVAL
FIRST PRIZE

- **VISUALIZING**— Explain that authors use descriptive language so that the reader may create a visual image in their mind of the story action, setting, or characters. Model a simple example using your classroom, yourself, or a student and ask your class to guess what you are describing. Then, provide your students with one of the excerpts below. Read the sentences aloud with them and address any new vocabulary words to clarify meaning. Students should then draw a picture of what they imagine the words to be describing. Ask them to label parts of their pictures with specific words from the excerpt that helped them with their visualizing.

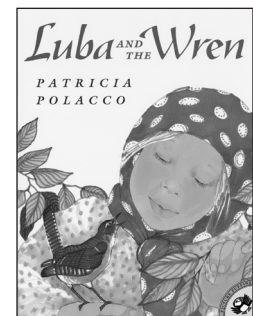


“You see, whenever he daydreamed with his friends, they could actually SEE the dreams! Right out of the top of his head they drifted. They twisted through shafts of brilliant sunlight. Floated up, up, up into the sunny sky. There was so much to look at, animals, birds, flowers . . . all in wondrous, vibrant colors!”

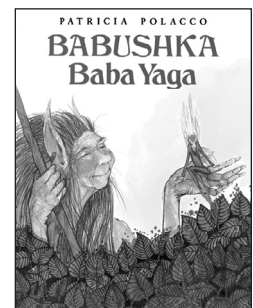
“Their house was crowded and small. The roof leaked. The fences needed mending. The fields, although lovingly tended, were meager and bare. They had little comfort. But their daughter, Luba, was full of joy . . .”



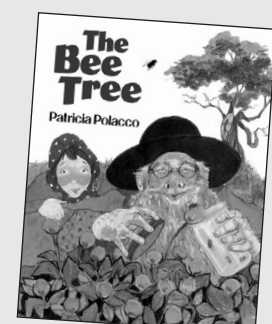
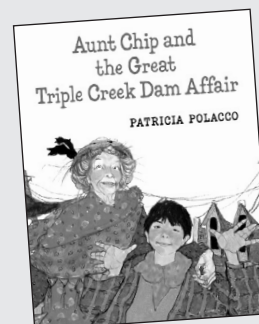
“I leaned over and looked inside. I saw a woman with high cheekbones and a broad smile with one overlapping front tooth, just like mine. She had glistening blue eyes and tousled brown hair that fell to her shoulders.”



“She looked at the reflection of herself in the stream. ‘I shall have to scrub the forest from my skin, cut my nails, comb my hair . . . but my ears,’ she said with a sigh. ‘What will I do about my ears.’ And then she remembered babushkas always wore scarves.”



Don't miss these two Polacco classics about the importance of **READING!**



A DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR *JANUARY'S SPARROW*

Pre-Reading Research Prompts & Activities:

- Define some of the more difficult and unfamiliar words and terms used throughout *January's Sparrow*. What do the following words and phrases mean: plantation, paddy roller, slave catcher, negro, auction block, slave act. As you read *January's Sparrow*, make note of how each of these terms appear in the story.

- What was the Underground Railroad? Who used it? What were some of the signals used to let travelers know where to stop? Why did these signals need to be used? As you read *January's Sparrow*, make a list of the characters who were part of the Underground Railroad and what they did to help others during the story.

- Compare and contrast the North and the South during the time of January's and Sadie's story. How did the Civil War begin according to history books? According to January? Who fought in the Civil War? What did each side stand for?

- Define slavery. How and where did it start? When did it end? In *January's Sparrow* and in history, did people view slavery differently depending on what area of the country they lived in? Why do you think it was that many families, like the Crosswhites, had Canada as a final destination? What did it mean for states like Indiana and Michigan to be considered "free states?"



Questions for Discussion:

- Why does January run away from the plantation? Why does Master Giltner punish January in front of the other slaves?

- January says, "Sarah Crosswhite was the onliest person that loved David." Describe Sarah Crosswhite's and Master Giltner's son, David's, relationship. Was it common for a slave to develop this kind of connection to his or her owner?

- Why is the sparrow Sadie's most treasured possession? Sadie says, "She'd known he was gonna run. She'd said nothin' to anyone. Now her heart ached at the thought that she hadn't told her momma and daddy. Maybe they could have stopped January. Then he wouldn't have been beaten, and he'd still be here." Why does Sadie keep January's secret? Do you believe she could have saved him?

- Why do the Crosswhites decide to runaway? How do they escape? Who helps them? Why does the girl who rows them across the Ohio River keep her back to their group and not tell the family her name?

- Why do Adam and Sarah finally agree to stay in Marshall? Is it safe for them to be there? What is Adam's plan if the paddy rollers come? Do you agree with their decision? What would you have done?

- Sadie had never seen a map of the country, snow, or mittens before she arrived in Marshall. Imagine what this would be like.

- What does Sarah name her new baby? Why does she choose this name? Do you agree with her? What does it mean for the baby to be a "free person?"

- What happens to Sadie at the fair when she sees the hog auction? How does she react? Why?

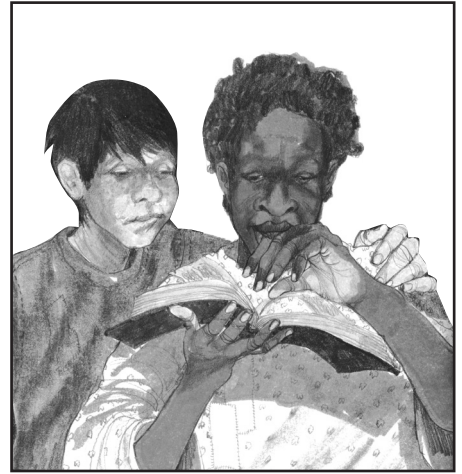
- Describe the scene in Marshall outside the Crosswhite house the night the Kentucky four come to town. What do the townspeople do to support and defend the Crosswhites? What does January do?

- What does January mean when he says, "I guess some secrets is meant to be kept and some ain't." Who keeps secrets throughout *January's Sparrow*? Who doesn't? Why do you think Sadie shares her secret with Polly?

READING RESPONSE JOURNAL

Reading Response journals are a place where students can record their thoughts, reactions, feelings, and questions about a book. Use the following prompts to encourage your student to think critically about the Patricia Polacco book they're reading.

- What does the story make you think about?
- What feelings do you experience?
- Does this book remind you of anything else?
- What did you really like about this book?
- How do you feel about the characters in this book?
- In what ways can you identify with the main character?
- Were there any real life issues that made you think?



Dear Journal,

Date: _____

[illegible]

I am writing this journal entry about _____
(write in book's title)

LANGUAGE ARTS : CONSIDERING CHARACTER

"I Am" is a great way to practice descriptive writing, to demonstrate reading comprehension, and to perform character analysis. Selecting a character from one of Patricia Polacco's books, have students complete the prompts about that character by following along on the worksheets provided in this booklet or, alternatively, students may create an original slideshow using PowerPoint or Movie Maker. Before students begin, model one version of each type of poem on the board or on chart paper and explain the elements that should be added to each line.

"I AM" POEM INSTRUCTIONS:

"I AM" POEM

FIRST STANZA:

I am . . . (name the character)
I wonder . . . (something the character is actually curious about)
I hear . . . (an imaginary sound the character might hear)
I see . . . (an imaginary sight the character might see)
I want . . . (something the character truly desires)

SECOND STANZA:

I pretend . . . (something the character actually pretends to do)
I feel . . . (a feeling about something imaginary)
I touch . . . (an imaginary touch)
I worry . . . (something that really bothers the character)
I cry . . . (something that makes the character very sad)
I am . . . (character's name repeated)

THIRD STANZA:

I understand . . . (something the character knows is true)
I say . . . (something that the character believes in)
I dream . . . (something the character might actually dream about)
I try . . . (something the character really makes an effort about)
I hope . . . (something the character actually hopes for)
I am . . . (character's name repeated)



“I AM” POEM, inspired by _____
by Patricia Polacco

I am _____

I wonder _____

I hear _____

I see _____

I want _____

I pretend _____

I feel _____

I touch _____

I worry _____

I cry _____

I am _____

I understand _____

I say _____

I dream _____

I try _____

I hope _____

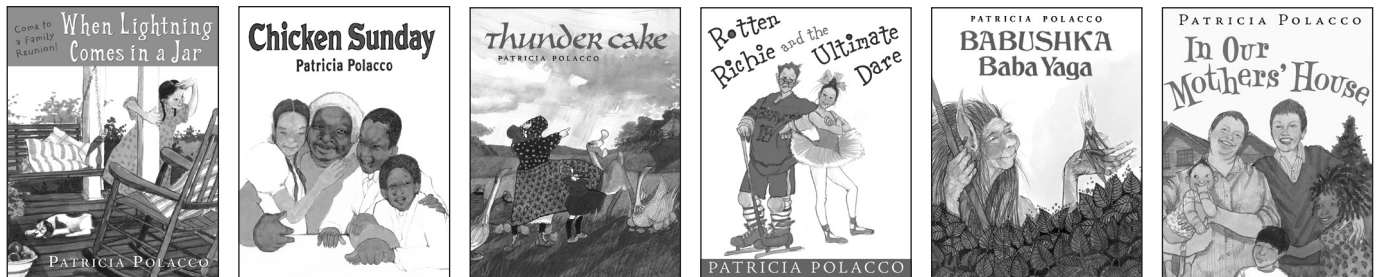
I am _____

THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

Writer's Workshop & Journaling Exercises

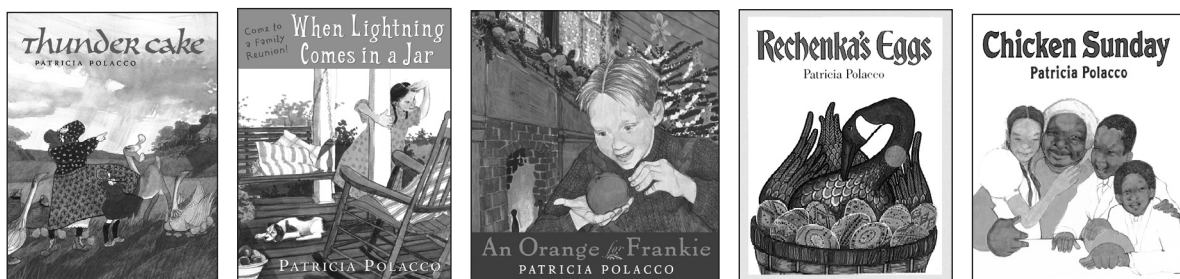
THEME RECOGNITION IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE READING PROCESS THAT LEADS TO MORE COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING OF PLOT. Patricia Polacco's books effortlessly lend themselves to many areas of thematic study, can be easily incorporated into classroom discussion, and serve as prompts for writing workshops and journaling exercises. Use the activities below to help incorporate Patricia Polacco's books into your lesson plans.

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS



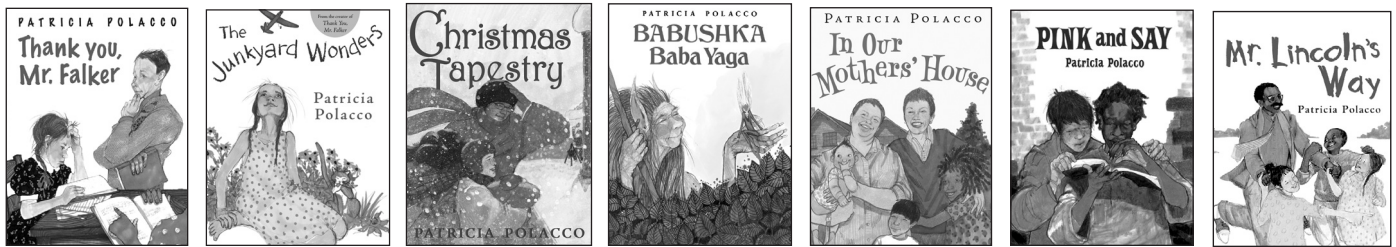
Families come in many shapes and sizes! The relationships we have with our family members are very important. We learn from them and in turn, we teach them what we know. Do your students have a brother or a sister like Trisha or Richie in *Rotten Richie and the Ultimate Dare*? Have their grandmothers ever helped them overcome their fear of storms by making a *Thunder Cake*? What can we all learn from Marmee and Meema in *In our Mothers' House* and from *Babushka Baba Yaga* about acceptance and the power of love? Many of Patricia Polacco's stories are based on experiences she's had in her own life. Ask students to choose a small moment that meant something to them, a family member they feel a special connection with, or an item they treasure. Have them write a short piece about what makes their moment, relative, or item stand out as unique and special.

TRADITIONS AND HERITAGE



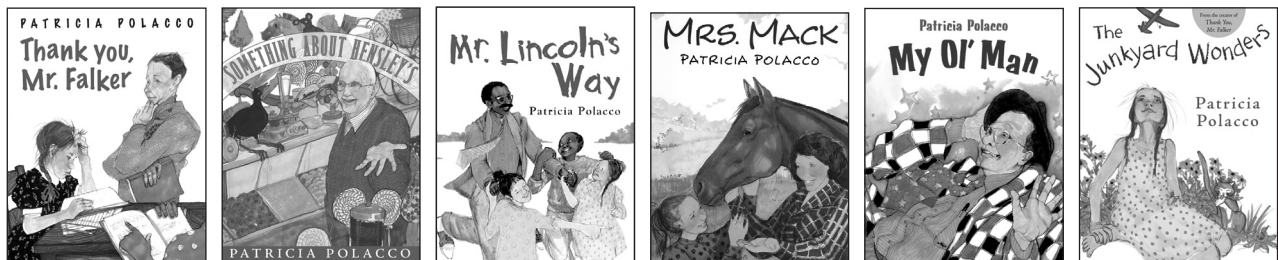
Discuss the meaning of tradition and the role it may play in your students' lives. What customs or rituals do they practice at home? Do they have a *babushka* who makes thunder cakes? Do they have an annual family reunion where they catch lightening bugs like Trisha does in *When Lightning Comes in a Jar*? Do they have a special decoration they put up each holiday season like Frankie in *An Orange for Frankie*? Do they paint eggs at Easter like in *Rechenka's Eggs* or *Chicken Sunday*? Ask them to speak to an elder in their family and find out the history of the tradition and how their family came to honor it. What tradition would they each eventually want to start themselves? Why?

UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENCES



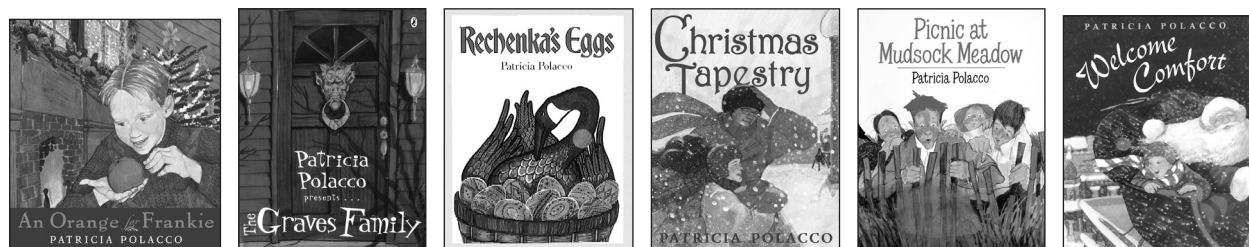
Understanding each others' differences is one of the most important lessons to be learned from Patricia Polacco's books. In *Thank You, Mr. Falker* we are taught that each student learns differently—and that there's no one right way to discover new things in the classroom. Similarly, in *Junkyard Wonders*, Mrs. Peterson helps the class see themselves as Wonders instead of kids who are differently abled. *Christmas Tapestry* is a powerful story about people of different faiths coming together. *In Our Mothers' House* showcases the different and wonderful types of families that one can have—and illustrates that the only common ingredient needed is love. *Pink and Say* is a beloved classic of two unlikely friends. Mr. Lincoln shows us all kinds of people are beautiful in *Mr. Lincoln's Way*. As a class, make a list of the most important things your students have learned. Who taught them these things? How do they know them to be true? Ask each student to choose one of the lessons and expand upon it in a writing activity. Ask each of your students to interview another member of the class. What new things did they learn about their peer? Have each child present one or two special and unique facts about their partner. Show how your students' differences make them an even more special group!

EVERYDAY HEROES



Heroes are usually thought of in a much larger context—sports players, movie stars, famous folks from history. But many of the best and brightest shining heroes can be found right in your hometown, school, or even your very own family! Ask your students to make a list of their top three heroes. How many of the children automatically listed a family member, friend, or teacher? Read the books shown above. Then ask them to make a second list, this time, of only people they know who have played important roles in their lives. Discuss what an “everyday” hero is and how your students can become them! How can they help each other? How can they help your classroom to be the best community it can be? Have each student write a letter to their hero sharing their feelings and thanks with him or her.

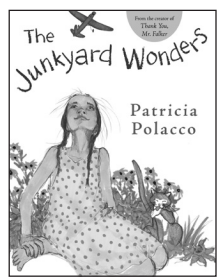
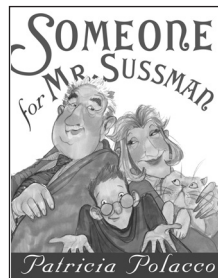
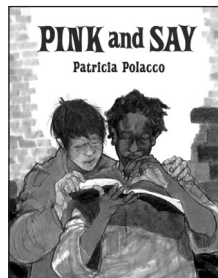
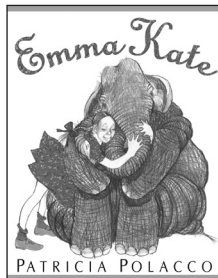
CLASSROOM CELEBRATIONS



From Christmas to Halloween and back again, Patricia Polacco's books will help you celebrate all year long! Write ghost stories centered in your town, instead of at Mudsock Meadow. Decorate eggs as pretty as Rechenka's for your own Spring Festival. Take the opportunity holidays provide to celebrate together—and to take the time to learn about the different ways and different types of holidays can be celebrated.

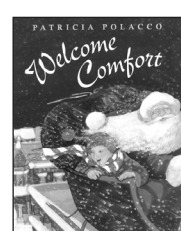
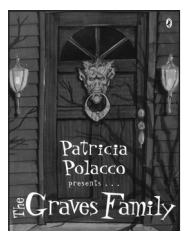
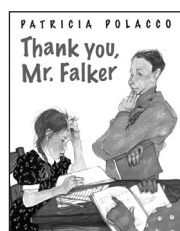
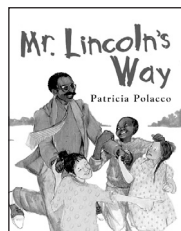
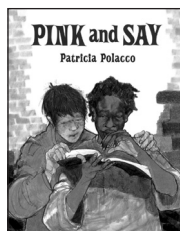
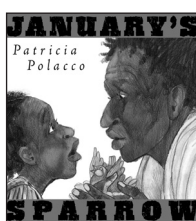
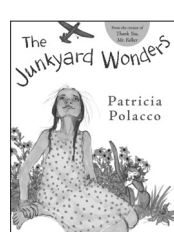
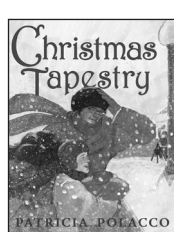
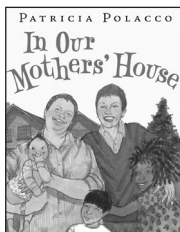
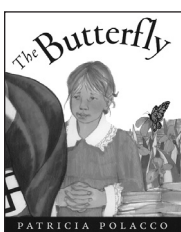
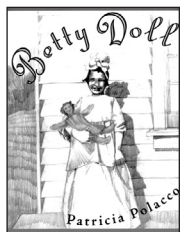
ADDITIONAL THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

FRIENDSHIP



Friendship can take on many different forms. In *Emma Kate*, we learn the wonder of pretend play. In *Ginger and Petunia*, we see how special friendships can form between people and their pets. In *Pink and Say*, we experience the bond of two unlikely friends and see how it strengthens, connects, and enriches them. In *The Lemonade Club*, Traci and Miss Wichelman's class show Marilyn the healing power of real friendship. In *Someone for Mr. Sussman*, we learn about how to create the perfect match between two people. In *Junkyard Wonders* the three other children in Trisha's "Tribe" become her best friends and we see how the group supports each other through struggles and tragedy. Ask your students to define friendship. What does the word mean to them? Students should make a list of adjectives and nouns that describe and represent their idea of friendship and then use these words to create a poem. The poem will make a wonderful, thoughtful gift for the friend of their choice!

TEACHING SENSITIVE TOPICS



Patricia Polacco's books can be used in the classroom to make sensitive—but important—topics simple to teach. Use *Welcome Comfort*, *The Graves Family*, *Mr. Lincoln's Way*, *Thank You, Mr. Falker*, and the new *Junkyard Wonders* to discuss bullying and understanding differences with your students. *Thank You, Mr. Falker* and *Junkyard Wonders* can also be used to touch on learning disabilities. In *Our Mothers' House* is the perfect story to illustrate the importance of love and the many different types of families that exist. *Pink and Say* and *January's Sparrow* work as excellent introductions to the Civil War and slavery, while *The Butterfly* is a friendship story that sheds important light on World War II. *Christmas Tapestry* is another WW II tale and is also a good book for exploring faith. *The Lemonade Club* can be used to help students understand illness and *Betty Doll* can help ease the pain of loss. Read these stories to your class or give them to individual students on a need-by-need basis. Finding themselves and their situations in a story can help children understand and cope in a positive and productive way.

THEMATIC BOOKSHELF & BIN LABELS

With her broad and comprehensive backlist, Patricia Polacco's work easily lends itself to a fantastically effective and easy to execute author study unit. Photocopy and color the labels below to use in organizing Patricia Polacco's many books into categories that will help direct your readers as they complete the projects in this booklet—or those you develop on your own!

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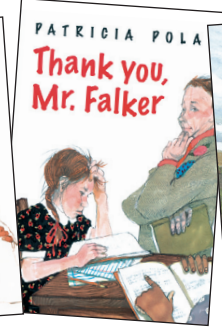
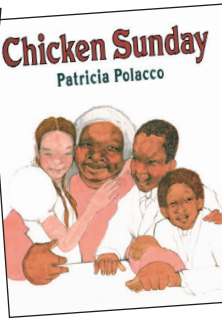
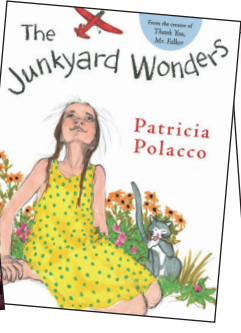
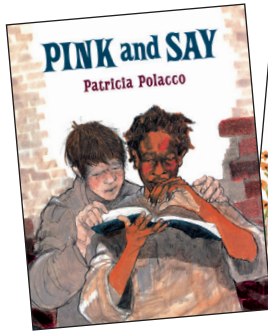
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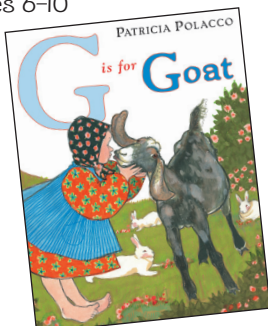
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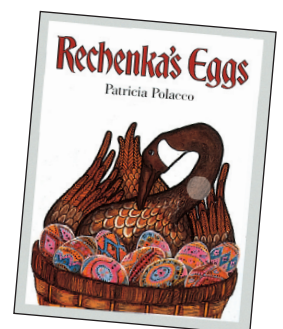
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